



Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

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To all interested parties

23 February 1994

Dear Sir/Madam

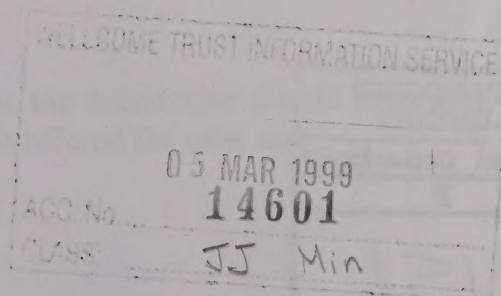
THE LABELLING OF FOODS PRODUCED USING GENETIC MODIFICATION TECHNIQUES

The Food Advisory Committee (FAC) has completed its review of its internal guidelines for the labelling of foods produced using genetic modification techniques (GM foods). In doing so it has considered the role which genetic modification techniques are beginning to play in the preparation of foodstuffs; the results of a consultation exercise it carried out during 1993; and the "Report of the Committee on the Ethics of Genetic Modification and Food Use", which recognised that some consumers might have concerns about eating foods produced using genetic modification and recommended that all foods containing "ethically sensitive" copy genes should be labelled to allow consumers to make their own decisions whether or not they wished to consume them.

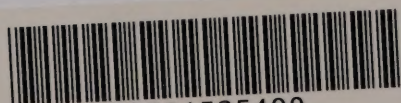
The attached paper records the Committee's conclusions and recommendations. The Government has accepted the Committee's advice and is to seek provisions on these lines in the proposed novel foods regulation currently under discussion in Brussels. Meanwhile the FAC will continue to consider the labelling of GM foods on a case by case basis and will use this advice to Ministers as a basis for determining whether there should be a labelling requirement for such foods.

Yours faithfully

Denise Love
Consumer Protection Division



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FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE GUIDELINES FOR THE LABELLING OF FOODS PRODUCED USING GENETIC MODIFICATION

1. The Food Advisory Committee (FAC) has reviewed its guidelines¹ for the labelling of foods produced from genetically modified organisms (GM foods). It has considered the role which genetic modification techniques are beginning to play in the preparation of foodstuffs and the results of a consultation exercise it carried out during 1993. It has also considered the "Report of the Committee on the Ethics of Genetic Modification and Food Use"² (the Polkinghorne Report), which recognised that some consumers might have concerns about eating foods produced using genetic modification. The Polkinghorne Committee recommended that all foods containing human copy genes; or copy genes from animals subject to religious dietary restrictions; or copy genes from animals in foods otherwise acceptable to vegetarians, should be labelled to allow consumers to make their own decisions about whether or not they wished to consume them.

2. The FAC has taken the view that it would be unrealistic to label all genetically modified foods, but noted that public concern centred on the three types of potential GM foods already identified by the Polkinghorne Report. It therefore proposed mandatory labelling rules in cases where

- (a) a foodstuff contains a copy gene originally derived from a human; or
- (b) a foodstuff contains a copy gene originally derived from an animal which is the subject of religious dietary restrictions; or
- (c) a foodstuff is a plant or microbial material and it contains a copy gene originally derived from an animal.

These rules would not apply if the inserted gene had been destroyed during processing and was not, therefore, present in the final food.

3. The forms of labelling that the FAC has recommended to indicate the presence of copy genes in a foodstuff are:

a simple declaration, "contains copies of x genes", "x" indicating whether the genes are human, pig etc;

for single ingredient foods and foods sold loose, the declaration should form part of, or accompany, the name under which the food is offered for sale; and

¹Appendix VI of the Committee's Report on its Review of Food Labelling and Advertising 1990 (FdAC/REP/10), available through HMSO book shops, ISBN 0-11-242913-0 Price £11.25.

²Available through HMSO book shops, ISBN 0-11-242954-8 Price £7.95.

for prepacked foods which contain ingredients that contain copy genes, the declaration should accompany the name of the ingredient in the list of ingredients. If the copy gene is present in an ingredient which under current rules does not need to be listed, the declaration should be made, either in the ingredients list or next to the name of the food.

4. The Government has accepted the Committee's advice and is to seek provisions on these lines in the proposed novel foods regulation currently under discussion in Brussels. Meanwhile the FAC will continue to consider the labelling of GM foods on a case by case basis and will use its advice to Ministers as a basis for determining whether there should be a labelling requirement when considering such foods.

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